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AUTHOR Imel, Susan
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ABSTRACT

In 1966, Congress approved the first adult education act, and the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) system was established. Monies to support adult education research and delivery systems became available at the same time as a mechanism was put in place to collect and disseminate results of these activities. The Adult Education Act (AEA) provides funding for adult education programs serving educationally disadvantaged adults. As amendments have expanded its scope, both enrollees and financial support have increased. ERIC is a federally supported educational database designed to put the results of educational research and development in the hands of researchers, practitioners, administrators, and policymakers. Sixteen clearinghouses acquire and process information in their assigned area to build the ERIC database. The database, which can be accessed through printed index, by computer, or in CD-ROM format, consists of document literature announced monthly in "Resources in Education" and journal literature included in "Current Index to Journals in Education." ERIC clearinghouses provide reference services and develop and dissemination informational products. The ERIC system collects and disseminates two categories of materials related to the AEA: those that are about the act and those that are the results of projects and research funded by the act, such as reports and curricula. (10 references) (YLB)

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

DIGEST
NO. 107

ERIC and the Adult Education Act
25 Years of Collaboration

by Susan Imel

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
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In 1966, two events of significance for the field of adult education occurred: Congress approved the first adult education act in the Nation's history and the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) system was established. Although these were independent events, it was fortuitous that the passage of the Adult Education Act and the launching of a national education information network occurred during the same year. It meant that at the same time monies to support adult education research and delivery systems became available, there was a mechanism in place to collect and disseminate the results of these activities. This *ERIC Digest* highlights the 25-year collaboration between the Adult Education Act (AEA) and the ERIC system.

Brief descriptions of both the AEA and the ERIC system begin the *Digest*. Next, using ERIC to locate AEA-related resources is discussed. Information about making contact with appropriate ERIC components and the U.S. Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy concludes the *Digest*.

The Adult Education Act

The Adult Education Act is the major piece of federal legislation providing funding for adult education programs serving educationally disadvantaged adults. Currently administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy, this act distributes funds to the states for adult basic education programs offered in a variety of institutions--local education agencies, community colleges, community-based organizations, workplaces, and correctional institutions (Crandall and Imel 1991).

Although it has its origin in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, adult basic education was established as a distinctive program with the passage of the Adult Education Act of 1966 (Parker 1990). This historical piece of legislation established the authorization for the Adult Education program in the Office of Education, expanded the program to include adults with limited English proficiency, and authorized grants for special experimental demonstration projects and for teacher training. Since 1966, the AEA has been amended many times, most recently in 1988. These amendments have expanded the scope of the act to include adult school completion, a competency-based approach to assessment and programming, and workplace literacy programs (Division of Adult Education and Literacy [1990]). When reauthorized in 1991, it is expected that the Adult Education Act will provide greater support for and coordination of adult basic education and adult literacy initiatives at local and state levels (Crandall and Imel 1991).

The enlarged scope of the act has been accompanied by an increase in both enrollees and financial support. The number of persons served by the act has grown from a half million adults in 1968 to more than 3 million in 1988. Although the amount of federal funding for the act has increased--from $30.6 million in 1968 to $238.8 million in 1991--it has been the increase in state and local support--from $9.6 million in 1968 to $510.5 million in 1988--that is an indication of widespread support for the act and its purposes (Division of Adult Education and Literacy [1990]).

ERIC--The Educational Resources Information Center

ERIC--the Educational Resources Information Center--is a federally supported educational database that currently receives its funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Designed to put the results of educational research and development in the hands of researchers, practitioners, administrators, and policymakers, ERIC consists of a central unit in Washington, DC, and 16 clearinghouses located throughout the country, each focusing on a specific area of education.

Each clearinghouse is responsible for acquiring and processing information in its assigned area in order to build the ERIC database. The database, which can be accessed through printed index, by computer, or in CD-ROM format, consists of two types of literature. The first is the document literature, sometimes known as "fugitive material" since it would not be readily available unless selected and included in ERIC. Recently completed research reports, curriculum and instructional materials, teaching guides, descriptions and evaluations of exemplary programs, and other documents are examples of the types of materials that are announced in ERIC's monthly document index, *Resources in Education* (RIE). ERIC also includes journal literature. Each month articles from more than 700 education-related journals are annotated and included in *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE).

In addition to building the database, ERIC Clearinghouses provide reference services to their client groups by answering questions, making referrals to other agencies, and providing searches of the ERIC database. They also develop and disseminate products--such as this *ERIC Digest*--that provide information on high-interest areas within education and that review and synthesize material in the database.

Using ERIC to Locate AEA-Related Resources

For the past 25 years, the ERIC system has been collecting and disseminating materials related to the Adult Education Act. These materials can be classified into two categories: those that are about the act and those that are results (i.e., curricula, project reports) of projects and research funded by the act. Each of these categories is described, including information on terms (ERIC descriptors or identifiers) to provide access to the materials.

Materials about the Act

Over the years, there have been a number of items written about the act itself. Some of these pieces are analyses of the act, some are evaluations, and some recommend changes in the legislation. The earliest ERIC report about the Adult Education Act is *Adult Basic Education. Program Summary* (Office of Education 1967) that provides a brief description of the federal adult basic education program for fiscal years 1965,

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1966 and estimates for 1967. Other examples of materials in this category are ***An Assessment of the State-Administered Program of the Adult Education Act. Final Report*** (Young and others 1980), "The Adult Education Act: Issues and Perspectives on Reauthorization" (Taylor 1983), "State of the Art in Adult Basic Education" (Delker 1984), and ***Promoting Innovation and Controversy in Adult Basic Education: Section 309 of the Adult Education Act*** (Radwin 1984). Materials about the act can be retrieved using the identifier "Adult Education Act."

Information about Projects Funded under the Act

Reports and products produced by projects funded with AEA monies constitute most of the AEA-related information in ERIC. The majority of these resulted from special research and demonstration projects funded through Sections 309, 310, and, most recently, 353 of the act. Although there is a large collection of materials in this category, it is not complete because many reports were never submitted to ERIC and some that were did not meet the ERIC selection criteria. Unfortunately, it is not as easy to retrieve materials in this category from the database. Since 1983, projects funded under either Section 310 or Section 353 of the act have been cataloged with the identifiers "310 Project" or "353 Project." To retrieve materials prior to that, it is helpful to know the institution where the project was conducted or some other identifying information such as the name of the project director.

Catalogs of AEA-funded projects included in the ERIC database can be used to locate information about specific projects. Examples of these include ***Clearinghouse ADELL's Catalog of Adult Education Projects, Fiscal Year 1978, funded under the Adult Education Act Sections 306 (A) (4) and 309 (1) and (2)*** (Clearinghouse ADELL 1978); and ***Catalog of Adult Education Projects, Fiscal Year 1982*** (Office of Vocational and Adult Education 1982).

For Further Information

Further information about ERIC and AEA-related materials in the ERIC database can be acquired by contacting the **ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090** or the **National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education (NCLE), Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.** NCLE is an adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse that collects literacy materials for adults and out-of-school youth with limited-English proficiency. Both ERIC/ACVE and NCLE produce Digests and other free or low-cost materials on topics related to adult literacy and basic education.

Further information about the AEA can be obtained from the **Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL), Office of Vocational and Adult Education, USDE, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20036.**

Adult Education Act
Silver Anniversary
1966-1991
Toward A Literate America

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CENTER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1900 KENNY ROAD • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210
Telephone (614) 292-4353 or (800) 848-4815